and none knew how to work with the army committees. Since I could not use them in field work, I left them to carry on the office routine while I continued my old role of itinerant trouble shooter.

The situation at the front grew worse from day to day. The Kerensky-Kornilov affair destroyed all the work of such men as Vilenkin and General Danilov in the Fifth Army, or Kuchin, Kharash, and Generals Boldyrev and Parsky in the Twelfth. One regiment after another deposed their old regimental committee and elected a new one packed with Communist sympathizers. The army committees were losing their hold over the masses of soldiers. The troops ignored service orders. Riots and acts of violence broke out every day. I had preserved some vestige of authority as the commissar whom Kornilov had threatened to court-martial for defending the soldiers. The story was told in the army with the usual exaggeration: there were rumors that Kornilov ordered me to be shot or hung or both and that I escaped by miracle. This legend gave some weight to my words when I addressed rioting men. As before, I could afford to speak forcefully to a trigger-happy mob, but I felt that the prestige of the All-Russian Executive Committee was dwindling because, by supporting the Provisional Government, it had put itself in the boat with Kerensky.

During the excitement of the Kornilov mutiny, the government had resigned, leaving all power in the hands of Kerensky, apparently to give him full freedom of action against the Supreme Commander. I do not know what he was expected to do after the Soviet had crushed the mutiny. I was not in Petrograd in those days and can neither explain nor understand how the All-Russian Executive Committee, with all material power in its hands, could allow the formation of the irresponsible "Five-Man Directory" with Kerensky as president. I learned later that the arrangement was accepted in a hurry, for a two or three days' interregnum. The crisis, however, lasted more than four weeks, and throughout this time Russia actually had no government.

The newspapers were filled with stories—not all equally true—about the Kornilov-Kerensky conspiracy. The only way to erase the disastrous effect of these rumors on the army would have been to let everyone involved in it stand public trial. Instead, Kornilov and a few generals were arrested while Kerensky, in his dual capacity as the head of government and Supreme Commander, commuted between Petrograd and Mogilev. Vicious rumors had it that he stayed in Mogilev to suppress the evidence of his role in the conspiracy. As if this were not enough, he was appointed—I do not know by whom—to form a new Cabinet, and he promised to fill the posts in the Cabinet with representatives of industry, trade, and the stock exchange, eliminating any dependence of the government on the All-Russian